



JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

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Societas Johnsoniana in Oslo

For some time we have been eager to know more about the Johnson Society in Oslo, Norway, and consequently welcome the following account sent on by Rolv Laache (37 Oscar's Gate, Oslo), President of the society:

"The Johnson Society in Oslo, or Societas Johnsoniana to give it its official name, was founded in 1921. When it celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary, which had to be postponed because of circumstances, in 1947 with a banquet, the traditional ceremonial which is a part of every meeting was rigorously observed. During dinner a member stands, delivers a speech in honor of 'the Doctor,' and ends by requesting those present to raise their glasses and drink (in claret) to his memory. The toast is always drunk standing. A little later, another member stands to speak in honor of 'the Baron.' This toast, too, is drunk standing—in claret. The members then devote themselves again to their dinner and to conversation until the last course has been served, when a third member, who remains seated, speaks of 'the Biographer' and concludes by asking the company to drink to his memory. This toast, which is drunk seated, is honored not in claret but in aqua vitae. The reason for this departure from normal custom, for the fact that Boswell's memory is saluted in a stronger fluid than claret, is self-evident. The members remain seated because the Biographer, although the author of the greatest work of its kind in literature, must inevitably yield place to the Society's two tutelary spirits, the Doctor, first and foremost, then the Baron.

"Now I can almost hear, as I write, the readers of the *Johnsonian News Letter* asking who on earth is the Baron and what can he have to do with Samuel Johnson? He whom we so honor is Ludvig

Holberg (born at Bergen 1684, died in Copenhagen in 1754), historian, moral philosopher, essayist and, above all, writer of comedies — a truly great name in literature. He is the father of modern Norwegian-Danish literature, and the dominant representative in the Northern Countries of the spirit of the eighteenth century. Johnson and Holberg had not a little in common. The Doctor received a Royal Pension for his services to literature and Holberg was by his King made a Baron for the same reason. Both were ardent spokesmen of the Classicism of their country, and they had both arrived at the same sorrowful conclusion about human life: 'much to be endured, and little to be enjoyed.' It is fitting that Norway's greatest living Holberg-scholar is a member of the Society, as is also Denmark's.

"The Societas Johnsoniana was founded by Dr. Fredrik Scheel, historian and Keeper of the State Records, an accomplished humanist and Latin scholar, whose all too early death in 1932 was mourned far beyond the intimate circle of the Society which he founded. At the meetings, he was referred to simply as Fundator and this tradition has been maintained. His presidential addresses in which, with a twinkle in his eye, he spoke of the most widely differing themes and brought his unmistakably Johnsonian mind to play on them, will never be forgotten by those who had the good fortune to listen to him. His successor in the Presidential Chair — he is referred to as Praeses — is apparently fated to become Praeses Perpetuus, for on each occasion when he signifies his wish to yield place to another, he speaks to deaf ears. Most members of the Society (we call ourselves socii) would seem to hold that 'old wine, old books, old friends are best.' This is the spirit of the Society, for it respects tradition and is firmly opposed to change simply for the sake of change.

"Latin is the vehicle of the Society's protocol, but the members find it convenient to use the vulgar tongue at meetings. True enough, one learned socius many years ago delivered a speech in Latin, but (be it gracefully admitted) not all of the socii could follow him equally well.

"It is, however, the responsibility of the First Latin Secretary to see that the formalities are observed at meetings and he is also responsible, should the occasion arise, for deciding whether the meeting is being conducted in a true Johnsonian spirit; for logic must never be allowed to fall into pedantry. The first *Norwegian* Secretary arranges the meetings and deals with other practical

affairs. Both the Latin and the Norwegian Secretaries have deputies who assume their burdens of office in case of absence so that continuity may be assured.

"Unfortunately, the Society does not possess its own club-rooms. Members meet three times a year at an inn (the traditional Johnsonian way) for a simple but substantial dinner. The dates of these meetings are fixed. The first takes place on September 18th to mark the Doctor's birthday. The second is held on December 3rd to mark the Baron's. The third should logically be held on the Biographer's anniversary, but, as this would bring the meetings too close together, this gathering is held in June at one or other open air restaurant where the members may admire Nature at her best and reflect on Johnson's excursion with Boswell to Greenwich in 1763.

"A member, possessed, perhaps, with more humor than tact, once defined Societas Johnsoniana as 'a cross between l'Académie Française and the Pickwick Club.' It numbers about fifty members in Oslo as well as some others scattered throughout the country. To these must be added the foreign Members, for Denmark, Finland, Great Britain, Iceland and Sweden are also represented, but not, unfortunately, the United States of America. U.S. interests are consequently represented by socius Wilhelm Morgenstierne, the Norwegian Ambassador in Washington, whose younger brother, the well-known philologist, holds a special place in the Society, not only as a Foundation Member but as the first man to whom Fundator turned when he began to consider whom he would have around him.

"It is of no avail to seek membership. The Society itself selects the new members and their election, which is presided over by the Election President — who has served in this capacity for more than two decades, takes place annually on the Doctor's birthday. A vote is taken on each name proposed and the vote must be unanimous if the candidate is to be elected. Those who come through this test receive a notification from the Praeses, in Latin, informing them accordingly.

"We have no laws but the unwritten. Our observances are tempered with mercy. The tradition that a member who absents himself from three successive meetings without adequate reason is regarded as having forfeited his membership is not rigidly applied. A few have resigned but these so-called 'quondams' are not many, and the enthusiasm with which the great majority regard their Society can only be appreciated by those who have attended its meetings....

"From the outset, it was Fundator's firm determination to

avoid at all costs making the Society so uniform as to be dull and he would not hear of anything which threatened to restrict membership to 'penmen.' What he had in mind was the Doctor's Literary Club, and it is possible that he also had before him the composition of an Oxford Senior Common Room. He wished to assemble men representative of all interests but with a common humanistic outlook, and this policy has been maintained. The Society contains historians, medicos and theologians, scientists and mathematicians, journalists and antiquarians, philologists and schoolmasters, men of law, men of letters, diplomats and many other variations of homo sapiens.

"All ages are represented — there is a difference of some forty years between the oldest and the youngest member — and all shades of political opinion. We are, in short, a diverse company and not a few rank among Norway's leading men.

"During the Occupation no meetings were held and the Doctor's spirit, so to speak, went 'underground.' There was, nevertheless, activity enough. Many socii were arrested by the Germans and thrown into concentration camp and others were forced to flee their native land. All served their country well. Those who reached Britain found a tireless helper and friend in their fellow-member, an expert on Norwegian affairs, Geoffrey Cathorne-Hardy, who, after the war, was created Commander of the Order of St. Olav by H.M. King Haakon VII and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Oslo. It is not out of place to note that one of the exiled Norwegian members who in London did so much for their country during its years of distress, a linguist, a lexicographer and a true Johnsonian, received, as did the Doctor before him, an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Oxford. What Boswell wrote of the earlier and greater Doctor may also be applied to our socius: 'he did not vaunt of his new dignity but I understand that he was highly pleased with it.'

"When peace came, the Society took up its activities anew; the opening words of the speech by Praeses, delivered that evening, ran: 'Der Führer is dead, but the Doctor lives.'"

The Gough Square Johnson House

In previous numbers we have commented on the necessity of securing some additional financial support for the preservation of Johnson's house in Gough Square, the endowment generously provided by the late Lord Harmsworth being now inadequate. After long consideration,

the Trustees of the House have decided to establish a society to be known as "The Friends of Dr. Johnson's House," with regular membership and an annual subscription (with a sliding scale). A prospectus of the new society, describing its aims and problems, will soon be sent to all of you. We hope many will feel inclined to join.

Incidentally, the most recent issue of "The Rambler," the bulletin of the Boswell Club of Chicago, is given over almost entirely to material about the Gough Square House.

Dryden

At long last we have the new edition of George R. Noyes' *Dryden's Complete Poetical Works* (Cambridge Edition, Houghton Mifflin publishers) a valuable tool for all of us who teach the Restoration period.

As Jim Osborn points out in a recent letter, "it is remarkable that a man who has spent forty years in Slavonic scholarship could go back to an edition and do such a careful and comprehensive synthesis of Dryden scholarship." The publisher used the old plates for the bulk of the volume (much to be regretted, though probably inevitable), but there have been a good many additions and changes. One gathering, beginning with page 901, has been reset, to the volumes's great advantage, and many new notes have been added. Similarly, the "Biographical Sketch" has been rewritten and expanded. As Osborn comments, this biography of some thirty-five thousand words is now "the best life of Dryden available, in practically any length, although Ward, Bredvold and Adams of Cornell are all at work on extensive biographies."

Noyes carries his excellent scholarship with grace, making generous acknowledgment throughout to the work of other scholars. All in all, his book is a model of what re-editing after a long period of time should be.

Joseph Spence

Our readers may look forward soon to two important books concerning Pope's modest Boswell, Joseph Spence.

Austin Wright's (Carnegie Tech.) long awaited biography of Spence is scheduled for publication by the Univ. of Chicago Press on July 21. In this book Wright gives a full account of

Spence's literary career, with emphasis on his literary friendships and Spence's own writings. During the 18th century Spence's various essays and his *Polymetis* were widely known and regarded. On the other hand, he is remembered chiefly today because of his intimacy with Alexander Pope, recorded in the *Anecdotes*, which was not published until fifty-two years after Spence's death. But he was equally intimate with minor figures of the age, including Dodsley, Lowth, Shenstone, and others.

A new edition of Spence's *Anecdotes* is under active preparation by Jim Osborn (Yale). This last winter he spent six weeks at the Huntington Library working on the new edition, which is to be based on the mass of original manuscripts in his own collection, as well as other sources. The known *Anecdotes* will be increased by the addition of about fifteen percent of new material, some of it quite provocative.

Surprisingly, Spence's *Anecdotes* have never before been carefully annotated. Osborn is also faced with the problem of placing the anecdotes in a logical order, a matter that troubled Spence himself, as well as Malone and Underhill, among others who have dealt with them. These two books on Spence will be welcomed by all students of the Augustan Age.

Swift Scholarship

Late in May Harold Williams delivered three lectures at Cambridge, all concerned with the late Arthur Case's arguments against Faulkner's text of *Gulliver's Travels*. The first lecture discussed new information about the publication of the *Travels*; the second analyzed the Faulkner text. The third contributed evidence from the text of Faulkner's volumes 1, 2, and 4, supplemented by Swift's manuscript corrections in his own copy of the Pope and Swift *Miscellanies*, 1727-32, proving that Swift must have taken quite a large part in the four volumes of the 1935 Faulkner *Works* and that, as Williams puts it, "it is no use treating the *Travels* as an independent problem." These three Sanders lectures will in time be published by the Cambridge Univ. Press.

Herbert Davis writes that Vol. VII of his edition of Swift's works is in proof and should appear soon. It will be followed by Vol. VI; then by Vol. VIII. On the latter, Irvin Ehrenpreis (Indiana) has been aiding with the text and notes. Davis indicates that he has hopes of completing the entire edition by 1953, and as

soon as possible the first three volumes (long unobtainable) will be reprinted. An article by Davis, to which we will all eagerly look forward, is concerned with the manuscript (acquired by Lord Rothschild in 1946) of the "Directions to Servants" in Swift's autograph.

A convenient inexpensive reprinting of some of Swift's best pieces may be found in *Selected Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, edited with an Introduction by John Hayward, and now available in this country, published by the Chanticleer Press (41 E. 50th St., N.Y.C.), price \$2.00. Included is all of *Gulliver* and some of the better prose essays, though there is very little from *A Tale of a Tub* and none of the poems.

George Sherburn has provided an excellent Introduction to the inexpensive edition of *Gulliver's Travels* in Harper's Modern Classics. This printing contains only the text and provides no explanatory notes or other helps for students.

For a new suggestion concerning the origin of the name "Yahoo" see J. R. Moore, "The Yahoos of the African Travellers," *N & Q*, April 29, 1950. A minor point is considered in J. C. Maxwell, "'A Tale of a Tub': a Correction," *N & Q*, June 10.

Recent Johnsonian Publications

Bertrand Bronson has provided an admirable Introduction to the facsimile reprinting of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* and numbers 5 and 60 of *The Rambler*, just issued by the Augustan Reprint Society (Publication No. 22, Series VI, No. 2). As indicated in our last number, extra copies can be secured for 60¢ from the William Andrews Clark Library, U.C.L.A. Bronson's Introduction contains some shrewd and interesting critical remarks.

In England, as the first issue of The Reynard Library (Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd.), there has just appeared the most comprehensive popular collection of Johnson's own writings so far published. The selection has been made by Mona Wilson. We have not yet seen a copy, but from the advertisements we gather that it is a volume of 960 pages, on thin paper, large Crown Octavo in size (price one guinea). Included is all of *Rasselas*, *A Journey to the Western Islands*, the Prefaces to the Dictionary and to Shakespeare, copious selections from the essays, the principal poems, selections from the political pamphlets and from the *Lives of the Poets*, etc. Such a full selection will be welcomed

by all who teach the Age of Johnson. At last we will have a volume containing all of the works we want students to consult. Significant, as a sign of the shifting popular attitude toward Johnson as a writer, is the advertisement of the volume in the *FLS*, where the comment is made: "the new volume is intended as an ample introduction to one of the greatest of English writers." A far cry from the old idea that Johnson is remembered solely because of Boswell!

An interesting and challenging defense of "Johnson as Poet" is made by J. R. Moore (Indiana) in *The Boston Public Library Quarterly* for April 1950. This is a revised version of a paper read at the MLA at Stanford last September.

Other recent articles concerned with Johnson are: Robert F. Metzdorf, "A Newly Recovered Criticism of Johnson's *Irene*" in *Harvard Library Bulletin*, Spring 1950; Kathleen Tillotson, "Arnold and Johnson" in *RES* for April 1950; D. J. Greene, "The Johnsonian Canon: a Neglected Attribution" in *PMLA* for June; and continued notes on the Dictionary by A. W. Atkinson in *N & Q* for April 15 and June 10.

Books About the Eighteenth Century Still in Print

You may remember that in our issue of June 1949 we passed on the suggestion made by Edward Hooker that we secure from various university presses lists of scholarly works having to do with our period which are still available. In the October issue John Butt urged us to follow up this suggestion. At last, here is the first list. We hope in later numbers to include similar lists secured from other publishers.

The Columbia Univ. Press can still supply the following:

- Adams, H.H. and Hathaway, B., *Dramatic Essays of the Neoclassic Age* (just published, \$5.50)
- Babenroth, A.C., *English Childhood: Wordsworth's Tradition of Childhood in the Light of English Poetry from Prior to Crabbe* (\$2.75 paper)
- Bagster-Collins, J.E., *George Colman, the Younger* (\$3.00)
- Benson, Mary S., *Women in Eighteenth Century America* (\$4.00)
- Cushing, Mary G., *Pierre Le Tourneur* (\$1.00)
- Defoe's *Review*, Intro. and notes by A.W. Secord (facsimile text in 22 vols., \$88.00)

- Dilworth, E.N., *The Unsentimental Journey of Laurence Sterne* (\$2.25)
- Eves, C.K., *Matthew Prior, Poet and Diplomatist* (\$4.00)
- Fairchild, Hoxie N., *Religious Trends in English Poetry*. Vol. I: 1700-1740 (\$6.75); Vol. II: 1740-1780 (\$6.00)
- Fitzgerald, Margaret M., *First Follow Nature; Primitivism in English Poetry, 1725-1750* (\$3.00)
- Gambrell, Mary L., *Ministerial Training in Eighteenth Century New England* (\$2.50)
- Gordon, D.H. and Torrey, Norman L., *The Censoring of Diderot's "Encyclopedie"* (\$3.00)
- Irwin, William R., *The Making of Jonathan Wild: a Study in the Literary Method of Henry Fielding* (\$2.00)
- Libby, Margaret S., *The Attitude of Voltaire towards Magic and the Sciences* (\$3.75)
- Maestro, Marcello T., *Voltaire and Beccaria as Reformers of Criminal Law* (\$2.00)
- Marraro, Howard T., *Memoirs of the Life and Peregrinations of the Florentine Philip Mazzei 1730-1818* (\$4.00)
- Marshall, Roderick, *Italy in English Literature 1755-1815* (\$3.50)
- Mossner, Ernest C., *The Forgotten Hume* (\$3.50)
- Neff, Emery, *A Revolution in European Poetry 1660-1900* (\$3.00)
- Page, Eugene R., *George Colman, the Elder* (\$1.75)
- Payne, William L., *Daniel Defoe as the Author of "The Review"* (\$2.25)
- , *Index to Defoe's "Review"* (\$4.00)
- Peardon, T.P., *The Transition in English Historical Writing, 1760-1830* (\$4.50)
- Prior, Moody E., *The Language of Tragedy* (\$5.00)
- Quinlan, Maurice J., *Victorian Prelude: a History of English Manners, 1700-1830* (\$4.00)
- Russell, T.W., *Voltaire, Dryden and Heroic Tragedy* (\$2.75)
- Schilling, Bernard N., *Conservative England and the Case Against Voltaire* (\$4.50)

Schmitz, Robert M., *Hugh Blair* (\$2.75)

Shorr, Philip, *Science and Superstition in the Eighteenth Century: a Study of the Treatment of Science in Two Encyclopedias of 1725-1750: Chambers' Cyclopaedia: London (1728), and Zedler's Universal Lexicon: Leipzig (1732- 1750)* (\$1.50)

Sibley, Agnes, *Alexander Pope's Prestige in America, 1725-1835* (\$2.50)

Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, ed. Ed. Hodnett, illustrated by Charles Locke, etc. (\$2.00)

Willey, Basil, *The Eighteenth Century Background* (\$4.00)

Yarborough, Minnie C., *John Horne Tooke* (\$1.25)

There are also a number of the issues of the Facsimile Text Society which are still available. In our field are:

The American Magazine, or a Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies (Jan. — March 1741) (\$2.00)

Blake's *Poetical Sketches* (1783) (\$1.00)

W.H. Brown's *The Power of Sympathy, or the Triumph of Nature* (\$2.50)

Benjamin Franklin's *A Dissertation on Liberty and Necessity, Pleasure and Pain* (\$1.50)

, *The General Magazine* (Jan. — June 1741) (\$3.00)

Clara Reeve's *The Progress of Romance* (1785) (\$1.25)

Miscellaneous News Items

D. Nichol Smith is to spend all next year in Australia at Adelaide.

Richmond P. Bond (N.C.) is to be Honorary Lecturer in English at University College, University of London, for next year.

J. R. Moore (Indiana) is to hold one of the Senior Fellowships at the Huntington Library for 1950-51, where he will work on his biography of Defoe.

We had intended picking a bone with Fon Boardman of the Columbia Univ. Press, for suggesting Boswell's *Life of Johnson* as an example of one of the ten "most boring classics" (He was proposing a poll of the readers of his lively *Pleasures of Publishing*). But now that the results of the poll have been announced and the

Life comes after *Paradise Lost* and *The Faerie Queene* we won't object. Certainly, Boswell is in good company!

Was the "Jeremy Feeble" inquiry in *TLS* of April 14 a hoax? And did any of you write in to report a discovery of "Feeble" letters in your attic?

New Publications

Elsewhere we are reviewing at some length Robert Brittain's edition of *Poems by Christopher Smart* (Princeton U.P.), and do not care to repeat what we have said. Briefly we think it a very valuable volume, containing some top-notch criticism of Smart, his life and art. No attempt has been made to provide a complete edition, as in Norman Callan's two volumes in the Muses' Library. Instead Brittain concentrates on what he considers Smart's best work, the religious lyrics. And his critical estimate of Smart's greatness as a writer of religious lyrics, as well as the detailed analyses of individual poems and techniques, can be heartily recommended. It is too bad that W. H. Bond's stimulating theory about *Rejoice in the Lamb* came too late to be considered.

The Grove Press has issued *Selected Writings of the Ingenious Mrs. Aphra Behn*, containing four short novels, the play "The Dutch Lover," and a few poems.

In the past we carelessly forgot to mention the Augustan Reprint Society's facsimile reprint of *Critical Remarks on Sir Charles Grandison, Clarissa, and Pamela* (1754). With A. D. McKillop's excellent introduction, it should be useful for students of the 18th-century novel.

From A. Lloyd-Jones comes a printed list of the officers and members of the Johnson Society of London, and also the twentieth annual report of the society.

Ruth Wallerstein's valuable analysis of Dryden's ode to Anne Killigrew is included in her *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Poetic*, announced by the Univ. of Wis. Press.

Some Recent Articles

Before listing the few articles we have been able to glean during rare visits to libraries this summer, we might mention a recent letter from a lay subscriber complaining that the abbreviations used for the various periodicals were not always immedi-

ately clear to him. In a later number we will include a complete list of standard abbreviations used by scholarly bibliographers, as an aid to those of our readers who are out of the profession. And in the following we will avoid contractions.

To be listed this time are: W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., "The Game of Ombre in *The Rape of the Lock*," *Review of English Studies* for April; Ernest C. Mossner, "Philosophy and Biography: the Case of David Hume," *Philosophical Review* for April; F. Cordasco, "Junius and Milton," *Notes and Queries*, June 10; W. H. Chaloner, "The Egertons in Italy and the Netherlands, 1729-34," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* for March; Mary E. Knapp, "Garrick's Verses to the Marquis of Rockingham" in *Philological Quarterly* for January; Russell Kirk, "How Dead is Edmund Burke?" in *Queens Quarterly* for Summer 1950; Earl R. Wasserman, "The Inherent Values of Eighteenth-century Personification," *Publications of the Modern Language Ass'n* for June; Philip Gaskell, "Eighteenth-century Press Numbers: Their Use and Usefulness," *The Library* for March.

An entertaining article for all book lovers is W. S. Lewis, "You Know All About Books," in *Atlantic* for July.

Boswell, Johnson, and Garrick

From John Butt (Univ. of Durham) comes the following: "I suppose somebody must already have observed Boswell's earlier version of Johnson's remark 'if Garrick really believed himself to be that monster, Richard the Third, he deserved to be hanged every time he performed it' (*Life*, IV, 244). Boswell had already recorded the remark in the *London Magazine* (Sept. 1770) — or rather, a slightly different version of it:

'If, Sir, Garrick believes himself to be every character that he represents, he is a madman and ought to be confined. Nay, Sir, he is a villain, and ought to be hanged. If, for instance, he believes himself to be Macbeth, he has committed murder, he is a vile assassin; who, in violation of the laws of hospitality, as well as other principles, has imbrued his hands in the blood of his king while he was sleeping under his roof. If, Sir, he has really been that person in his own mind, he has in his own mind been as guilty as Macbeth!

Did Johnson make to all intents the same remark on two occasions (once to Boswell, as he avers in the *London Mag.* and once to Kemble, as he reports in the *Life*)? And when he came to report *sub* 1783 what Kemble had told him, did Boswell forget the previous occasion when Johnson had said much the same thing in his presence?"